

## **Senior Services of Snohomish County**

Senior Services of Snohomish County implemented the “Eat Better, Move More” program at three congregate meal sites – one in a rural senior center, one in an urban site serving Vietnamese elders, and the third in a low income senior housing project. Approximately 75-85 seniors have participated and a fourth site has been added at a large, urban senior center.

The 12-week program included mini-talks on nutrition and walking. Registered dietitians conducted weekly nutrition classes and participants received a step counter to track their progress in weekly walking groups.

Each week, participants received a “Tips and Tasks” sheet that included nutrition and physical activity information and a space to record number of steps taken each day. Participants were also asked to track the number of servings of specific food groups. Participants’ step goals were increased by 10 percent each week. Weekly drawings were also held for such prizes as food baskets that corresponded with the nutrition lesson of the day.

Preliminary examination shows that participants increased the number of steps taken daily during the program. Participants reported increased mobility, less joint pain, decreased depression, improved sleep, and new friendships. At the site serving Vietnamese elders, overall participation increased, milk consumption increased, and clients expressed a desire for the program to continue. Participants also developed informal support systems and many continued walking as a group after the program ended.

As a motivational tool and a measure of success, group steps were traced towards a destination of the group’s choice. One group accumulated enough steps to reach Washington, DC from Everett, Washington and another walked to Mexico on a “virtual” trip. A “mystery walk” was also planned for each group during the program. Transportation was provided to different locations such as, the Everett waterfront, a mall, local parks, and a private horse arena at the home of a senior center board member and the group walked to specified destination.

The range in the types of sites, their locations, and diversity of participants make this You Can! partner an exemplary example of what can be achieved.